VISION 21 IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes, May 18, 2006
Accepted June 15, 2006

The meeting was called to order at 7:14 p.m.

Members Present: Austin Bliss, Donna Brescia, Sara Oaklander, Meg O'Brien, Jennifer Page, Paul Solomon.
Also in Attendance: Delores Keefe.
Members Absent: Vinnie DeNovellis, Victoria Hasse, Ann Rittenburg, Paul Santos, Jay Szklut

1. Administrivia
Austin Bliss served as recorder. The minutes of the April 6, 2006 meeting were approved unanimously, with edits. The notes of May 4, 2006 meeting were reviewed but not officially approved, as the meeting did not have a quorum.

2. Updates

2.1 Harvard Lawn Fire Station Committee (Meg reporting)
The committee will host a public meeting Tues, June 6th @ 7pm. It is considering using the Belmont Center fire station RFP as a template. Future discussions will include issues of historic value and building preservation. No leaks or spills have been revealed on the property. An individual in Cambridge has expressed interest in acquiring the property for personal use, though the RFP process will go forward. The committee posed the question of acquiring the adjacent half-lot now used as a local parking lot with spaces for rent, but we do not know if the owner is interested in selling.

Jennifer shared the "reflections on process" paper from the Waverley Fire Station committee with Meg and will circulate to the full committee electronically.

2.2. Belmont Center (Sara reporting)
The Belmont Center Planning Group has received three proposals for purchase and development of the Leonard Street fire station; all included restaurants; some offered additional uses. (Copies will be available in the library.) The committee will hold a public meeting on Thurs, June 8th from 6:30 – 9:30 p.m. Backup meeting is planned for June 14th, if needed. The committee has developed a set of questions that the developers will answer. Delores suggested that the meeting be televised, if possible. The group will then make a recommendation for the Board of Selectmen.

The committee is finalizing their report on the Charette, while taking input from a survey that is available in several locations in town. Comments can also be submitted directly by email to Jeffrey. The next step will be to develop an action plan that will identify the person/group responsible for implementing each suggested action.

Belmont Center Planning Group is also working on interfacing with the businesses in the Center; Sara feels that this facet has not been successful to date. The group continues to meet weekly.

2.3 Sustainable Belmont Anti-Idling Grant (Jennifer reporting)
Sustainable Belmont has received several grants. $1500 was awarded by the DEP as part of a statewide anti-idling campaign. These funds must be used for the "purchase" of materials

developed by DEP for this purpose, and S.B. is using most of their award for acquiring signs and educational materials. Next meeting of SB: June 7, Library.

2.4 Town Day
The Vision Committee will share its table with Sustainable Belmont and Neighbors' Network, possibly also with the Belmont Center Planning Group. Sara has offered the use of her portable table. Meg will bring chairs. VIC volunteers will be Paul Santos, Austin, Meg, and Jennifer.

2.5 Meet Belmont
Adine Storer, who is stepping down as co-chair of Neighbor's Network, will still do publicity for this year's event; she has already prepared Meet Belmont posters and signup sheets for Town Day. Jennifer shared them with VIC. The next meeting of the Neighbors' Network organizing group is on May 25, 7:30, Library.

3. Policy Guidelines: Co-sponsoring or endorsing events
Jennifer received a request re: VIC co-sponsoring an upcoming Sustainable Belmont event. Sara moved to amend our policy guidelines regarding endorsements so that the chair has authority to approve VIC co-sponsorship or endorsement of events put on by VIC subcommittees and task forces. The motion was approved unanimously.

4. Next steps in planning our work
To help us determine action steps on major initiatives, Jennifer proposed that we work in small groups, each of which would recommend possible action items on one initiative.

A quick analysis of which initiatives to address:
• Communications: No action steps are required for the communications initiative. (Tom Younger is pressing committee chairs to post minutes.)
• Environment: Now in the excellent hands of Sustainable Belmont, and we will continue to provide oversight and support.
• Business: Jennifer and Sara will study and report back to VIC on next steps.
• Remaining Initiatives are: Welcoming, Education, and Revisiting the Vision
It was agreed that revisiting the vision is the most pressing challenge; Sara recommended that, rather than breaking into small groups, we spend the remainder of the evening working as a whole group, focusing on how to bring the Vision to the public. This suggestion was accepted.

5. The Vision: Community Meetings
5.1 **Recap**: Jennifer recapped the decisions so far: We don't need to change the vision at this time. It is a broad document that is subject to interpretation, thus it is still viable, useful. As it is only five years old, it is unimaginable that we have outlived it and/or accomplished it. Thus, we agreed that for the present we will continue to live with the vision as it is, without inviting changes to it. The real question is "Is the vision a document with which people are familiar?"

5.2 **Engage the town:** We agreed to invite the residents of Belmont to open dialog concerning the vision, letting people know the Town has a vision and what it is, and asking them to evaluate where the town stands in achieving the vision.

5.3 **Questions and comments raised**:

• We wondered if there is something to be learned from the other communities that have engaged in visioning?

• Sara offered a suggestion that public review of the vision might be a community-building opportunity. If we tried this, would we bring the town together to discuss each topic separately or the vision as a whole document? No decision was reached.

• Donna asked, Is the vision is too abstract for people to evaluate the town's progress on achieving it?

• Sara sees it as an opportunity to open up dialog into the topics. She can imagine a room where one wall has "things going on" and the other wall has "things that we wish are going on".

• We agreed to remove the word "evaluate" from this discussion, as we fear it gives the wrong focus.

• Paul suggested that we simply say, "Here are the elements of the vision, and here's what the Town has done. What other things should the Town do?" Or, "Here is what is going on, and here are things we wish were going on."

• Meg hoped people would embrace the vision, saying, "This is the kind of town I want, too."

• Donna said that one way to do this is to get people DOING something

• Paul asked, can the town's website assist in this effort? Can it be interactive?

5.4 **Agreement was reached on the following:**

• We will commit to conducting a series of community meetings about the Vision.

• The meetings will be interactive/ participatory, engaging. People will DO things at the meetings.

• The goals are to enable:

o the public to learn about the vision;

o the committee to raise the public profile of the vision;

o Town Meeting and individuals to reaffirm ownership of the vision;

o the committee and town residents to examine together where the Town is in implementing the vision and to propose next steps;

o townspeople to engage in meaningful dialog about the Town.

5.5 Challenges **and limitations**:

• Can we invent a format that is transportable? (Austin suggested we might also go to the residents, rather than always asking people to come to us. What about a "vision-mobile," attend block parties, farmers' market, meet with other groups, etc. to speak about the vision.

• There are relatively few of us. We need to ensure that the design and execution includes us all, but realistically reflects our own limitations.

• We have no budget.

• Many in town are not involved. To whom do we pitch it? Be realistic about expectations.

• Vision Committee members should not ever attempt to go alone to run one of these meetings.

5.6 **Homework:** We agreed to the following "homework" assignment for our June 1 meeting:

> **ASSIGNMENT**: Reflect on other meetings and workshops you've attended that were especially ENGAGING and participatory. On June 1 come prepared to share the "best" such strategies and activities that we might use in our upcoming community forums.

4. Meeting Effectiveness (VIC meetings, that is!): We discussed how to make our meetings more effective

4.1 **Avoid repetition**: We agreed it is unnecessary to recap the previous meeting. Reading the minutes should serve that function, and it is our obligation to do so. At the beginning of each meeting, we can ask clarifying questions, but we do not want to reopen issues we closed out.

4.2 **Frequency and scheduling of meetings**: Donna asked if, by meeting less frequently, we might increase our attendance rate. (It was dismaying that we had no quorum at the previous meeting, and only six members at this one.) Members felt that their own absences were unavoidable and not due to scheduling of VIC, reflected busy lives with several professional and family commitments taking precedence, but we agreed that attendance should be an important priority for each of us. We agreed that for next year we should poll members to determine if there is a better time/day to meet.

4.3 **Agenda**: Jennifer will try to get the agenda out earlier, as a reminder and as an enticement.

4.4 **Update reports**: Donna suggested that we submit our "update" reports in writing and circulate them before meetings. (e.g. see "updates" above). We would then only ask if there are questions. We acknowledged that this is an added burden on the committee member doing the reporting as well as on the committee chair to distribute the written report. No decision was reached.

5.   Next Meeting: Thursday, June 1, 2006 from 7-9 p.m.

6. **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 9:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Austin Bliss
Secretary Pro Tempore